

the Armed Forces. A rating of ten (10) points shall constitute a capital crime punishable by the administering of a lethal dose of lysergic acid diethylamide (LSD) or a life sentence of hard labor on the staff of William F. Buckley Jr.'s *National Review*.

This system of evaluation and punishment of militants will be beneficial because it will prevent the general populace from complaining that the United States are too good for such transgressors. It will also stop all conjecture about what should be done with that particular type of troublemaker.

Cell 22

by David Paul Allen

Big Jim Brace rolled over in bed, rubbed his eyes, and clumsily reached underneath the bunk for the half-completed crossword puzzle he had given up an hour earlier. Then the distant screech of metal against concrete brought him to his senses. He heard the footsteps coming closer—three of them. Mildly curious, he tossed his puzzle aside and waited for the steps to reach his end of the corridor.

Two familiar faces and a strange one appeared in front of his cell.

"Well, looks like I got me a brand new roomie! It's been lonely as all hell since Snider left," said Brace as he walked forward to the iron bars. "Now *that* was some graduatin' class, Snider, Wilson, and Goldberg all gettin' out the same day. The block ain't been the same since."

"Okay, Brace. Back up. You know the rules," said the first guard, unlocking the cell door. "No need to worry about his one leaving too soon. He's a lifer. If he ever gets paroled, it'll be long after you're dead and gone."

Brace took a few steps back and retorted, "You sayin' I can go once I'm dead? I always thought you fruits were gonna bury me here til I served my time."

"Don't get saucy, or I'll put this young slick in a different cell. Then you won't have anyone to cuddle up to."

"Sonofabitch! I oughta break your neck," growled Brace, making a snapping gesture with his crude hands.

The guard pushed his prisoner through the open door and closed it smiling strangely. "Don't count on ever having the chance, Super

woman." He chuckled with the other guard as the two of them walked away.

Brace muttered heavily under his breath. He then self-consciously stole a glance at the young man. The face revealed nothing other than that the mind behind it was in a different time and a different place.

After a few moments of silence, Brace looked straight at his companion on the opposite bunk and cleared his throat to capture some attention. "What the hell are *you* so solemn for? You'll get used to it. May even get to likin' it. Some do. Some don't. Once you've been in as long and as often as *I* have. . . . What'samatter? Too good to talk to me?" Irritated at being ignored, Brace stood and walked forward, his voice ringing with an authoritative tone. "That's fine for now, 'cause you got some listenin' to do. If you snore, you'll wake up with a fist down your throat. And no bellyachin' all night 'bout how you were framed. I've had enough of that shit to last me a lifetime. When you're assigned to a shop, the boys'll give you a few 'guidelines.' You'll be a lot better off doing as you're told." Even that powerful recitation wrought no change in the void expression of the young prisoner staring at the bars.

"What's your name, anyhow?" enquired Brace after a few minutes. His tone was almost apologetic.

"Sanders. . . . Phil Sanders."

"You always so quiet?"

"I don't know. I suppose I'm still . . . in a sort of shock."

"From what? Isn't this place as fancy as you thought it'd be?" said Brace, gesturing to the gray walls of the cell.

For the first time the quiet youth looked at Brace. "I never thought of it that way. It's just that all this came so fast. Why, just yesterday it seems everything was so perfect." A trace of a smile came to his face as he thought for a moment. "Kathy and I were. . ." But he thought too much. The sound of her name threw him into unrestrained sobbing. He covered his contorted face with his slender, sensitive hands.

"My God," blurted Brace I sure don't need another bleedin' heart around here." But Brace had second thoughts and even felt guilty for one of the few times in his life. "Ah, hell! Don't mind *me*, Kid. If it'll help any, tell me about it. Time is what I've got plenty of."

Sanders lifted his reddened face and spoke in a tremor. "I'm sorry that I did that. I'll have to adjust, I guess." Then he lay down

on his bunk and threw an arm across his eyes.

"Dammit! You're the worst person for clammin' up that I've ever seen. Don't ya know how to take advantage of a good list'ner?"

"I'd really prefer just to be left alone," replied Sanders, moving nothing but his lips.

Several hours passed in uneasy silence. Then Brace sat up and energetically yelled, "Hey, Kid! Do ya remember readin' in the papers about the bank jobs in all those littler jerk-water towns down South? Happened about six years ago. . ." Once again Brace noticed he was being ignored by his sleeping cell-mate and stopped short his bragging.

Footsteps again. The two guards walked past on their rounds and turned out the lights for the night, except for a few dim bulbs burning in the corridor.

Brace walked over to the opposite bunk and sat down on the edge of it. Staring at the handsome figure of Sanders, he whispered to himself, "Some do. Some don't." He gently unbuttoned Sanders' shirt and spread his trembling hands across the young man's pale white chest.

"Kathy?" Sanders moaned in his dream.

Brace, his eyes lighting up with eager anticipation, pulled Phil up and embraced him.

"God! What in the name of Christ are you doing!" exclaimed Sanders as his dream exploded.

"Shut your mouth! D'ya want the whole block to wake up? I swear, Kid, one of these days you'll be beggin' me."

"You perverted old bastard! You're sick! Everybody's just sick!"

"Mark my word," said Brace smugly.

The morning light revealed a twisted body on the floor of cell 22. The familiar guard stood yawning and studied it for a few minutes from the corridor. He casually walked to his station where he addressed another guard.

"What did I tell ya? We got a dead one in 22."

"By God! Didn't think it could happen so soon. It's Brace, isn't it?"

"Right."

"Strangled?"

"Looks like a broken neck. Sanders was sleeping like a baby."

"Three in a row now! You sure know how to call 'em."